

Creating and Using Text Sets

A **text set** is a collection of resources, focused on one topic, from different genres, media, and levels of reading difficulty that are designed to be supportive of the learning of readers with a range of experiences and interests.

Features of effective text sets:

- grow in complexity; consideration given to order of pieces
- offer various opinions - both sides
- include several reading levels
- feature a range of genres—posters, poetry, ads, interviews, blogs, etc.
- purposeful choice of infographic as appropriate
- include a variety of ways to respond to text
- if desired, lead to a finished piece of writing

Goals of effective text sets:

- mess around with how an idea grows and/or changes
- engage in inquiry and deeper reading of complex texts
- cite sources in academic writing
- accumulate into the writing of an argument

The following is taken from “Segregation by Ability: A Mini-Unit on Teaching Argument,” written by Tom Fox of the National Writing Project. The full article with the text set can be viewed [from the CRWP page](#).

Overview

Text sets can be used to integrate short daily warm-up activities into an ELA classroom. Reflections on the text sets are designed to accumulate into a short argument that students write, which could lead to a longer researched argument. These kinds of warm-up activities make efficient use of classroom time because they build fluency for students and give students experience with more complex tasks such as responding to text and citing sources.

The Use of “Writing into the Day”

Researchers and classroom teachers attest to the value of informal writing for fluency and learning. All writing, however, needs to be purposeful and eventually lead somewhere. Many teachers use the format of “Writing into the Day,” where students write informally during the first 5-7 minutes of the class period. Students settle down, get quiet, and start thinking. Text sets can draw on the practice of “Writing into the Day” as a means to support students’ learning to write arguments.

Argument Writing as Participation in a Conversation

Researchers and academics often refer to academic writing as a “conversation.” Students start by reading and understanding various voices in the conversations, their positions and points of view. As they begin to understand the exchanges among authors, students try out their own voices, their own opinions, by locating them among the other voices. Citing the other voices, by forwarding or countering, is the way that students enter these conversations. Templates for transcribing the conversation can be found on [the argument page of our wiki](#).

Readings

The selection of readings is designed to give students a multi-voiced conversation for them to participate in. See above for features of text sets.

Extensions

When students complete several mini-units, they can choose one that they are especially interested in and bring it to completion as a short argument. Additionally, students could extend one of their arguments into a longer piece by augmenting it with their own research.

A Three Day Plan:

Day 1: During the “Writing into the Day” give students the following directions:

- Read the first article.
- Underline or note in the margin the main claim of the article.
- Highlight what you consider the strongest evidence.

- Write informally for 5-7 minutes about what you want to know more about and where you stand on the issue.
- Keep your writing in your folder.

Day 2:

- Read one (or two) more articles.
- Draw a simple graphic that represents the relationship between this article/s and the article we read yesterday.
- Then write a short explanation of your graphic. Save it to use tomorrow.

Day 3:

- Take out the graphic and explanation that you composed yesterday and read it over. On the graphic, mark your own position in the conversation.
- Then write a short argument that makes a claim and cites evidence from the readings to support your argument.
- As you cite your evidence, note in the margin of your paper the specific purposes (forwarding or countering; from Harris) as you introduce and comment on your citation.

Sources for Articles for Text Sets:

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate>

<https://newsela.com/> non-fiction literacy and current events; a leveled reading program for grades 3-12

<http://kellygallagher.org/resources/articles.html> Article of the Week

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/subject/education/textsets> text sets resources guide

[An Exploration of Text Sets: Supporting All Readers](#) Read/Write/Think

[Text Sets: Providing Possibilities for Adolescent Readers](#)

[Resources for Selecting Texts and Creating Text Sets](#)

